

# Wetland Reserve Program

## 2009 FACT SHEET



The Wetlands Reserve Program (WRP) is a voluntary program that provides technical and financial assistance to eligible landowners to address wetland, wildlife habitat, soil, water, and related natural resource concerns on private lands in an environmentally beneficial and cost-effective manner. The program provides an opportunity for landowners to receive financial incentives to enhance wetlands in exchange for retiring marginal land from agriculture.



*A restored wetland in a former crop field.*

### Benefits

WRP participants benefit by:

- Receiving financial and technical assistance in return for restoring and protecting wetland functions and values;
- Seeing a reduction in problems associated with farming potentially difficult areas; and
- Having incentives to develop wildlife recreational opportunities on their land.

Wetlands benefit New Jersey by providing fish and wildlife habitat; improving water quality by filtering sediments and chemicals; reducing flooding; recharging groundwater; protecting biological diversity; as well as providing opportunities for educational, scientific, and recreational activities.

### Eligibility

Land is not eligible if it is owned by any governmental entity. To offer a conservation easement, the private landowner must have owned the land for at least 7 years prior to enrolling it in the program, except in certain circumstances. To participate in a restoration cost-share agreement, the private landowner must show evidence of ownership. To be eligible for WRP, land must be restorable and be suitable for wildlife benefits. This includes:

- Wetlands farmed under natural conditions;
- Farmed wetlands;
- Prior converted cropland;
- Farmed wetland pasture;
- Farmland that has become a wetland as a result of flooding;
- Riparian areas which link protected wetlands;
- Pasture or production forest land where the hydrology has been significantly degraded;
- Lands adjacent to protected wetlands that contribute significantly to wetland functions and values; and
- Previously restored wetlands that need long term protection.

### Uses of WRP Land

Participants voluntarily limit future use of the land, but retain private ownership. On acreage subject to a WRP easement, participants control access to the land and may lease the land for hunting, fishing, and other undeveloped recreational activities.

NRCS and the landowner jointly determine the restoration plan for the wetlands, but the landowner is required to implement the restoration plan with NRCS financial assistance.

### How to Apply

Landowners may file an application for a conservation easement or a restoration agreement at any time during the year. Applications are grouped for ranking when funds are available, normally once per year. Applications (form AD-1153) are available at any USDA Service Center office or online at <http://www.nj.nrcs.usda.gov/programs/wrp>. Applicants must indicate if the application is for an easement or restoration agreement. Easement applicants must also provide a copy of the deed when applying.

### *Enrollment Options Include:*

**Permanent Easement:** The easement value equals the lowest of the agricultural value of the land, an established payment cap, or an amount offered by the landowner. The agricultural value is determined annually by a market survey.

USDA pays 100 percent of the restoration costs, including maintenance activities, and all costs associated with recording the easement in the local land records office.

**Restoration Cost-Share Agreement:** This is a minimum 10-year agreement to re-establish degraded or lost wetland habitat. USDA pays 75 percent of the cost of the restoration activity, and maintenance of the habitat for the term of the agreement.

Restoration payments are limited to a maximum of \$50,000 per person per year. In addition, landowners must be in compliance with Highly Erodible Land and Wetland conservation provisions of the 1985 Farm Bill, as amended, on all land they farm and with the Adjusted Gross Income provisions of the 2008 Farm Bill.

*Enhanced shallow water areas*



### *After Restoration, Then What?*

NRCS and its partners continue to provide assistance to landowners after completion of restoration activities. This assistance may be in the form of reviewing restoration measures, clarifying technical and administrative aspects of the easement and project management needs, and providing basic biological and engineering advice on how to achieve optimum results for wetland dependent species.

At any time, a participant may request that additional activities be evaluated to determine if they are compatible uses for the site. This request may include such items as permission to cut hay, graze livestock, or harvest wood products. Compatible uses are allowed if they are fully consistent with the protection and enhancement of the wetland.

### **For More Information or to Sign Up, Contact Your Local USDA Service Center:**

*Burlington, Camden and Ocean counties*

**Columbus Service Center**

1971 Jacksonville-Jobstown Road, Columbus NJ 08036

Telephone: (609) 267-1639

*Mercer, Middlesex and Monmouth counties*

**Freehold Service Center**

4000 Kozloski Rd. Box 5033, Freehold, NJ 07728

Telephone: (732) 462-0075

*Hunterdon, Somerset and Union counties*

**Frenchtown Service Center**

687 Pittstown Rd Suite 2, Frenchtown, NJ 08825

Telephone: (908) 782-4614

*Bergen, Morris, Passaic, Sussex and Warren counties*

**Hackettstown Service Center**

Bldg #1, 101 Bilby Rd, Hackettstown, NJ 07840

Telephone: (908) 852-2576

*Atlantic, Cape May and Cumberland counties*

**Vineland Service Center**

1317 South Main Rd. Bldg 3, Vineland, NJ 08360

Telephone: (856) 205-1225

*Gloucester and Salem counties*

**Woodstown Service Center**

51 Cheney Road, Suite 2, Woodstown, NJ 08098

Telephone: (856) 769-1126

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